

## Southern Appalachian Creature Feature Podcasts

### Mountain Heritage Nature Trail

Greetings and welcome to the Southern Appalachian Creature Feature.

Over lunch one afternoon in a restaurant on the corner of the Burnsville, North Carolina town square, Jake Blood expounded on a vision of a Yancey County connected by trails, where one could walk from downtown Burnsville up to the top of Mount Mitchell. A notion, he explained, that would not only be good for outdoor recreation, but also the health of community members, and the local economy.

While Jake's vision may be a long way from fruition, a tiny part is taking shape as he and a team of partners work to install a nature trail on the campus of Mountain Heritage High School, Yancey County's only public high school. Jake represents High Country Trails – a non-profit organization dedicated to trail construction and maintenance in Yancey, Mitchell, and Avery counties. The effort has also brought support from the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, USDA Forest Service, North Carolina Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Haywood Community College, and the Mountain Heritage High School Eco-Club and cross-country team.

The school's campus encompasses a significant amount of forest land and is perched on the banks of the Cane River, home to the endangered Appalachian elktoe mussel. When completed, the trail will provide students at the high school and members of the community quick and easy access to the river and the forest, a stone's throw from downtown Burnsville.

For WNCW and the U.S. Fish & Wildlife Service, this is Gary Peeples.